

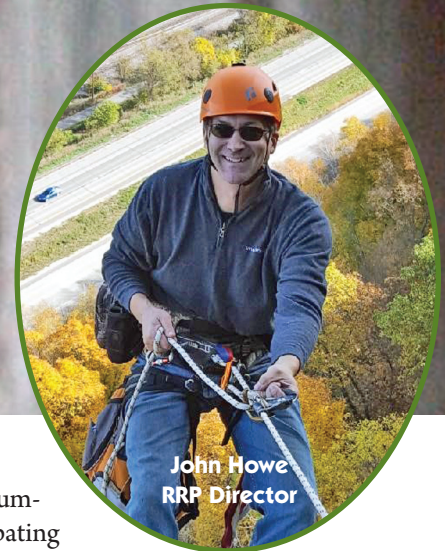
Raptor Resource Project News

Winter 2017
Volume 1 • Number 2



American Kestrel – Rettig Farm

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



John Howe
RRP Director

I'm happy to present our second Raptor Resource Project (RRP) newsletter. It has been a very eventful year and we have accomplished so much! I encourage you to take some time to look at our annual report, which can be found here: www.raptorresource.org/pdf/2017FinalBandingReport.pdf.

While our production numbers fell, we still banded 58 falcons at 22 sites in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa, upgraded cameras at four locations, and replaced the Great Spirit Bluff nest box. Thank you to everyone who helped get it done!

REFLECTION – The more I read headlines and listen to the news, the more I am convinced that our mission to connect our youth with raptors and develop future preservationists is a necessary one. I say, “our youth” realizing that many of you who watch us are young at heart and have already made a connection with raptors and the natural world. Young or old, many people are looking for an opportunity to connect and share their experience and knowledge. Raptors are resilient, but they need you and I as advocates. Connecting the young—and the young at heart—to birds of prey helps to assure their future... and our future, too!

Speaking of developing our youth and connecting them with nature and raptors, I could not be prouder of the progress we made in two of our initiatives!

1) We significantly expanded RRP's educational program and offerings through our volunteers and through partnerships with key stakeholders. With the help of our moderator volunteers, we

more than doubled the number of classrooms participating in our Decorah Eagles educational chat from 350 to over 900. We even had classrooms where the students led our regular moderated chat with the public. That is amazing! We are continuing to learn how to develop and deliver effective educational content. You can read more about that in our “Teacher's Corner” segment featuring Debbie Ripple's 5th grade class.

2) Thanks to a grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Conservation Education Program, we developed a collaborative field research educational program in partnership with Luther College. The project included establishing a raptor banding station at Hawk Hill on the NW corner of the Luther campus, to be managed by RRP's board member and master bander permit holder Dave Kester, and Emily Neal of the Luther College Center for Sustainable Communities and Environmental Studies. 237 students participated in educational modules and activities during the station's first year, and we have even bigger plans next year! You can read more about the station in the newsletter's “Program Spotlight”.

Thank you for your generous support and a huge round of applause to the partners, volunteers, and friends who help make progress possible. Here's to a great year to come!

The Robert Anderson Memorial Scholarship Fund was created to honor Bob's passion for raptors and to

support local students on their way to environmental conservation careers. The Raptor Resource Project has partnered with the Winneshiek County Community Foundation and Luther College to deliver scholarships to selected Luther College students. Gifts are received through contributions, bequests, charitable trust remainders, and other gifts directed to the Fund. Students will be selected on criteria including demonstrated concern for the environment through positive environmental activism and community involvement or independent studies related to environmentalism.

To make donations to the fund, contact the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa at 319-287-9106 or go to the donation page: www.cfneia.org/robert-anderson-scholarship

ROBERT ANDERSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

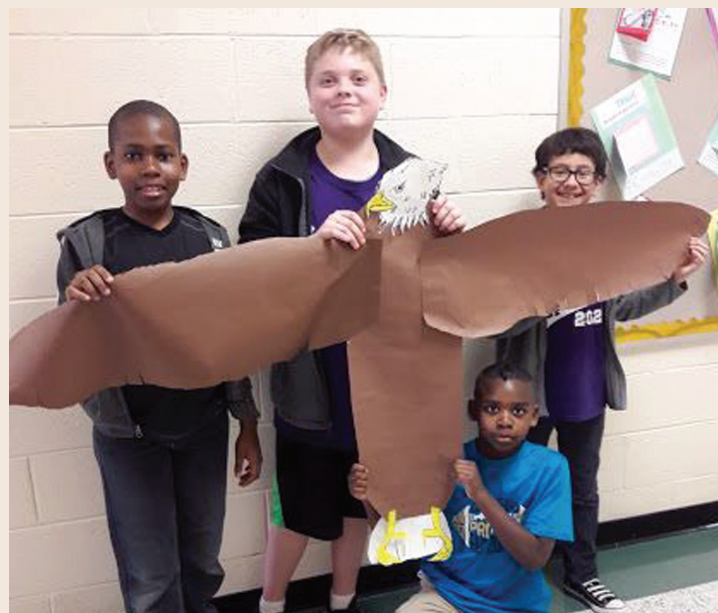


Robert Anderson holding Belinda.

TEACHER'S CORNER... Debbie Ripple

Wow! When I began watching the Decorah Eagles five years ago, I had no idea the impact they would have on myself, my classroom, and my students. It allows the students to get “outdoors” and experience nature live! I teach fifth grade science in Georgia, and the eagles fit perfectly into the life science standards about inherited traits, instincts, learned behaviors, and classification of animals. Language arts, writing, and research standards are easily embedded in our eagle learning also. We start the year off by using informational texts and a Venn diagram to compare/contrast male and female adult bald eagles. The next lesson is all about how to tell Mom and Dad apart. The students are eager to learn about the traits of each parent and love debating with each other about who is on the nest. Another favorite happens in the spring when we incubate and hatch baby chicks in class. Not only is this great real-life learning as we watch them hatch, but it leads to some great lessons with our eagles, too. A favorite of the kids each year is to compare and write about the different instincts and behaviors of baby chicks and eaglets. For example, an eaglet poop shoots out of the nest, but a baby chick goes anywhere it wants.

The Decorah Eagle cam has had a social impact on my students as well. I see a difference in behavior, social choices, and self-esteem. Many watch them at home and some even jump into chat and ask our moderators questions! I love it when a student comes to school and says, “Mrs. Ripple, were you watching the eagles last night? Did you see Mom...?”



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Autumn Migration Banding Station



Students in the Banding Station.



Emily Neal, assistant director for the Luther College Center for Sustainable Communities.



Matt releases a Red-Tailed Hawk.



Young students are introduced to birds of prey as part of our Introduction to Raptors module.

A Conservation Education Program grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources allowed Luther College and the Decorah Raptor Resource Project to build an autumn migration banding station on campus, giving students unprecedented direct access to wildlife and conversation research. The banding station, located on Hawk Hill on the northeast edge of the Luther campus, is large enough for classes to observe wild birds, band them and gather data before releasing them back into the wild.

Falconer Dave Noble designed and built the station with the help of Dave Kester, John Howe, and Amy Ries. In addition to master banders John Stravers (Hawk) and Kester, we hired six Luther interns to help staff the blind from September 15 to November 15. In total, they caught 36 hawks: Red-tailed Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Coopers Hawks, a Northern Goshawk, and a Rough-legged Hawk. 20 of the hawks were hatch year birds and 16 were adults, with 18 females, 12 males, and six of unknown sex. It was a wonderful field research experience for the interns, who became proficient at trapping, handling, ID'ing, sexing, aging, and banding wild hawks. 18 additional students from the University of Upper Iowa visited the blind with ornithologist and assistant Biology Professor Paul Skrade, who was thrilled to trap and band a Red-tailed Hawk during one of his visits.

Emily and Dave also worked with Decorah's schools to introduce younger students to birds of prey. 70 first and second grade students participated in our Introduction to Raptors module, 135 first through seventh grade students got to meet and greet a red-tailed hawk and/or a sharp-shinned hawk, and eight homeschool students took a field trip to the station, where they were introduced to banding and field research.

"The awe of being up close and personal with wildlife is a unique and rare opportunity," said Emily Neal, Luther College assistant director for the Center for Sustainable Communities and environmental studies staff instructor. "It's bringing people close to the natural world. Holding a bird in your hand and feeling something that's so free and powerful, yet at the same time fragile in a world where humans have such an impact on our environment is an amazing experience."



While technology has added a vital dimension to bird studies, there is nothing like a hands-on field program to bring us face to face with the lives and deaths of the birds we study. We are thrilled to have launched a collaborative environmental education and research program with Luther College, the Upper Iowa University, and Decorah schools. Our banding station is increasing the body of scientific knowledge about raptors and other birds in Iowa, giving a science-based environmental education to Iowa students, and creating effective conservation volunteers for birds of prey. Our mission calls on us to preserve and strengthen raptor populations and foster the next generation of preservationists. Our banding station is an essential part of that charge.

We are very grateful to the Iowa DNR for funding our program. The Iowa DNR and local conservation boards do a wonderful job protecting Iowa's resources. To learn more about Iowa's Conservation Education Program, please follow this link: www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/REAP/REAP-Funding-at-Work/Conservation-Education



Raptor Resource Project

PO Box 16
Decorah, IA 52101

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES, MN
PERMIT NO. 2805

Raptor Resource Project

John Howe – Executive Director
Amy Ries

Board of Directors

Randy Christman (President)
David Lynch (Treasurer)
John Dingley
Laura Johnson
Dave Kester
Brett Mandernack
Ken Mueller
Neil Rettig
Jim Robison

Volunteers

Social Media
Live Cam Moderators
Cam Operators
Raptor Surveyors
Videographers & Photographers

This newsletter was made possible by a generous grant from explore.org – Thank You!



UPCOMING EVENTS:
RRP's annual "Benefit for
Birds Of Prey" Fundraiser

Benefit for Birds of Prey

We will be holding our annual fundraiser on February 17th at the Celtic Junction in Saint Paul, MN. The benefit will start at 7:00 PM.

Mark your calendars and come join us for an evening learning about raptor initiatives and live entertainment!

836 Prior Avenue, St. Paul, MN

www.thecelticjunction.com

Get cool RRP stuff at our RRP
website merchandise page...

www.raptorresource.org/support-the-raptor-resource-project/merchandise/

Playing
Cards

T-Shirts

Mugs

We would like to thank our many partners...

Landowners
explore.org
Ustream
Xcel Energy
Dairyland Power
Minnesota Power
Great River Energy

Red Wing Grain
Ardent Milling
Luther College
Winneshiek County Community
Foundation
US Bank

...And Donors Like You!

www.raptorresource.org